

HR Policies at The Johns Hopkins Hospital Regarding Employees and Ebola

To the Johns Hopkins Hospital community

Dear Colleagues,

As we continue our preparations for a potential Ebola virus disease case at our hospital, we know you have many questions about your duties and responsibilities as health care professionals at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. We also want you to know what we are doing to protect you and to help you do the jobs you already do so well every day.

Our number one priority now and during any emergency situation is ensuring your health and safety and that of our patients and visitors.

While we are all concerned with the emerging Ebola threat, we cannot forget our responsibilities as health care providers to ensure that our patients receive the best and most compassionate care possible. Our hospital and human resources policies explicitly detail and govern how we carry out our duties and also spell out the professional expectations of our staff.

We have received many questions and hope the frequently asked questions below will answer most of them.

Q: Am I required to care for patients diagnosed with Ebola?

A: Our mission is to care for all patients who put their trust in our hands. Each of us at The Johns Hopkins Hospital is expected to honor this commitment. However, if you feel that you are unable to fulfill this commitment to our patients, we have a process in place to address your concerns. Employees who prefer not to participate because they believe doing so would conflict with their strongly held personal or cultural values, ethics, or religion may request an accommodation pursuant to the [Staff Request Not to Participate \(HR610\)](#) policy. This request will be managed by Human Resources and Occupational Health Services pursuant to the [Reasonable Accommodation](#) policy under the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as the [Religious Accommodation](#) policy.

Right now, the only accommodations that have been approved are for immunocompromised, pregnant or lactating women.

Q: Can employees take vacation to visit any of the affected nations (Liberia, Guinea, Mali or Sierra Leone)?

A: First, please note that the list of affected nations is subject to change. If your manager approves your vacation request, you may travel to these and/or other areas. We strongly advise that you review Department of State recommendations before you decide to travel. Upon your return to The Johns Hopkins Hospital, you must be screened and cleared by Occupational Health Services before returning to work. You may be designated as low (but not zero) risk, some risk or high risk.

Low (but not zero) risk means that a staff member:

- Traveled to a country with widespread Ebola transmission
- Had brief proximity to or brief direct contact with a person with Ebola who was in the early stage of the disease
- Traveled on an aircraft with a person with Ebola while that person was symptomatic

Some risk means that a staff member:

- Had direct contact while using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) with a person with Ebola while the person was symptomatic, or with that person's body fluids
- Had close contact in households, health care facilities or community settings with a person with Ebola while the person was symptomatic
 - Close contact is defined as being with a person with Ebola while the person was symptomatic for a prolonged period of time without wearing appropriate PPE within approximately 3 feet (1 meter)

The employees in these categories will be given a monitoring tool by Occupational Health Services staff. Employees will check their temperatures twice a day for 21 consecutive days, and Occupational Health Services will review their temperatures with them daily—except for weekends, when the Occupational Health Services office is closed. These employees will be allowed to return to work and will be followed during that 21-day period by Occupational Health Services based on infection control guidelines. If an employee becomes ill during this period, he or she will not be able to continue to work, will be sent home, may apply for family and medical leave/personal leave of absence, and use accrued leave.

High risk means that a staff member:

- Had direct/unprotected exposure to body/blood fluids of a known/suspected patient with Ebola without appropriate PPE
- Had percutaneous (e.g. needle-stick) or mucous membrane exposure to blood/body fluids of a person with Ebola while that person was symptomatic
- Engaged in lab processing of known/suspected patient with Ebola without appropriate PPE
- Had direct contact with a dead body without appropriate PPE in a country with widespread Ebola transmission
- Lived in the household with and provided direct care to a person with Ebola while that person was symptomatic

If there is a known high-risk exposure, you need to provide a statement indicating there is knowledge of high-risk exposure and that you will not be permitted to work for 21 days after your last exposure. You may be quarantined with guidance from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. You may apply for family and medical leave and use your accrued leave.

Q: What happens if I become ill or injured while taking care of a patient with a confirmed case of Ebola?

A: If you became ill or injured through work-related contact with a patient with Ebola, you will be placed on leave by the Department of Human Resources and Occupational Health Services, and you will be referred to the Johns Hopkins Worker's Compensation office. Worker's compensation would pay the medical and indemnity expenses for employees who contracted Ebola after exposure to a patient with a confirmed case of Ebola.

If it is confirmed that you may have contracted Ebola on the job, you will be placed on worker's compensation leave until cleared to return to duty. Family and medical leave/personal leave of absence would run concurrently while you are on worker's compensation, and your job will be held while you are on family and medical leave/personal leave of absence.

In the unlikely event an employee has a high-risk exposure in the workplace, it is our intent to provide the employee with the necessary evaluation and treatment and to ensure that the employee will continue to receive his or her regular full salary during the assessment and/or treatment period—after the appropriate disability or worker's compensation benefits are used. This will be re-evaluated as more is known about the risks of exposure and the course and treatment of the disease.

If you are exposed as a result of volunteer work that you engage in during your own time, you must report this information to Occupational Health Services. You will be treated according to local health department guidelines. You will be placed on medical leave and may use your paid annual leave. Family and medical leave would run concurrently while you are on medical leave, and your job will be held for you while you are on family and medical leave.

Q. Am I able to stay at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, rather than return home, until the Ebola status of the patient I have cared for is determined?

A. Our emergency operations plan has allowances for employees who elect to stay at the hospital. You can discuss this in detail with the emergency management staff. Again, we want to emphasize that the safety, health and protection of all our employees, patients and visitors remains our top priority throughout any emergency situation.

If you have any additional questions regarding human resources issues related to this situation, please call Bonnie Windsor in human resources at 410-955-8600.

Please note that this information is accurate as of today. This is an evolving situation, and we will update the information when necessary.

Sincerely,

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